



FALL NEWS LETTER • OCTOBER 1949

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Election Results

President R. W. WESTWOOD, Washington, D. C.

Vice-President EVA GORDON, Ithaca, N. Y.

Directors (1950-1951)

MARIE GAUDETTE DOROTHY TREAT WILLIAM VINAL
New York City New York City Amherst, Mass.

ROGER TORY PETERSON ARTHUR R. WHITEMORE
Glen Echo, Maryland Toronto, Canada

The A.A.A.S. Representative, E. L. Palmer, and the Secretary-Treasurer, Richard L. Weaver, have one more year to serve, as do these five Directors: Allan D. Cruickshank, Eva Gordon, Raymond Gregg, Charles E. Mohr, and Edwin Way Teale.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

While it is a reflection upon the perspicacity and wisdom of the members of the American Nature Study Society in reelecting me to the Presidency for another year, I will do my best to keep their judgment from being regarded as too wrong. I do, however, sincerely appreciate this expression of confidence, as much as I should have liked to see someone else at the helm for 1950.

The New York meeting is now history and was a distinct success. We even had to take down some of the removable walls in order to accommodate all who wished to attend our sessions. On the whole the cooperative effort worked quite well, but we have decided for another year to go back to the practice of holding our own family get-together dinner instead of the more formal and formidable banquet.

The meeting in 1950 will be held in Cleveland between Christmas and the New Year. Your President inherits the task of planning the program and to that end would appreciate any and all suggestions for topics and speakers to be included in the program.

I want to thank all who contributed so signally to the success of the New York meetings both in planning and performance. It proved that our Society has a lot of red blood coursing in its veins and it is a loyal, active and interested membership that is the heart that keeps that blood pumping. The continued success of the Society depends upon you as members, and your President and other officers are just there for you to advise and order about. Let us know what you are doing and what we can do to help you in what you are doing through this NEWS LETTER and in any other way. And best wishes for 1950. Make your plans now to be on hand in Cleveland.

RICHARD W. WESTWOOD, President

GREETINGS FROM 1950

The year 1950 was started on its way by one of the biggest and best meetings in the history of the American Nature Study Society. Over 350 people attended the programs in New York City, December 27th to 30th, at the New Yorker Hotel.

Our past President, Edwin Way Teale, did a bang-up job of planning this year's program.

Tuesday began with the annual business meeting. At this meeting it was felt that the Society is growing so rapidly both up and out, that we must begin to take on more important responsibilities. One way, is to make our opinions on nature publications, valued more by publishers, writers, and readers.

Dr. E. L. Palmer suggested that we start by selecting the twelve best nature books of the year. When this was brought up at the open meeting later, it met with approval, and Dr. Edward Boardman, of the Museum of Arts and Science at Rochester, N. Y. furthered this idea by recommending that in our News Letter, we present lists of current good nature books which have been reviewed by our members.

If any of you have additional suggestions, please get in touch with your editor. We must have your interest, ideas and needs, to keep on with this growing process.

The Tuesday afternoon session, was presided over by Edwin Way Teale. The meeting was full of substance. *Ellsworth Jaeger*, whose paper appears in this issue, talked on Nature Writing, and Nature Books.

Roger Tory Peterson spoke of the techniques involved in the illustration of nature books. He mentioned the difficulties of illustrating birds, for as he said, "an artist strives with his brushes and pigments to create the illusion of form. Nature, in coloring the birds, whether with pattern or countershading, attempts to obliterate form. First the artist builds the basic form of the bird, then he attempts to destroy it by super-imposing the bird's pattern. He winds up with a score of zero. This is why most successful bird painters have not attempted to interpret nature too photographically. Ornithological portraitists like George Sutton and myself, who illustrate bird books where identification is important, lean more to the *Fuertes* or *Allen Brooks* approach."

Raymond Bond of Dodd Mead Publishing Co. spoke amusingly and fluently, on the problems which beset a publisher. He gave some excellent advice on how not to write nature books. He closed with this: "Let's have more nature books, not fewer, and let's have them better. You, in the last resort, are the only ones who can make that possible."

(Continued on Page Two, Col. Two)

AMERICAN NATURE STUDY SOCIETY NEWS LETTER

Affiliated with The National Association of Biology Teachers

Affiliated with The National Science Teachers Association

Affiliated with The American Association for the Advancement of Science

Office of the Secretary-Treasurer

RICHARD L. WEAVER, Chapel Hill, N. C., Box 1078

Editor of the News Letter

HAZEL A. FINK, Box 111, Elmsford, N. Y.

Publication Dates: Winter, February; Spring, May; Summer, August; Fall, October

Our Secretary-Treasurer Elected President of N.A.B.T.

Dr. Richard L. Weaver who has served as our Secretary-Treasurer since 1943 has been elected President of the National Association of Biology Teachers to serve in 1951. He has served as Vice-President in 1949 and will plan the program for 1950.

Editorial Committee Elected

President Westwood appointed an Editorial Committee of three to assist in the publishing of the News Letter and the Page in Nature Magazine devoted to the Society. This committee consists of Charles Mohr, Raymond Gregg and Richard H. Pough.

A.N.S.S. Elected to Cooperative Committee

The AMERICAN NATURE STUDY SOCIETY was elected to membership on the Cooperative Committee of the American Association for the Advancement of Science at the recent meeting of the Committee in New York. The Cooperative Committee has been assisting in the planning of the cooperative programs of the three science teaching societies A.N.S.S., N.S.T.A., and N.A.B.T.

NATURE BOOK COMMITTEE APPOINTED

As a result of the excellent discussion on nature books which followed the panel discussion, and also stimulated by a letter from Margaret Morse Nice, President R. W. Westwood appointed a Nature Book Committee consisting of Eva Gordon as chairman, Dr. E. L. Palmer, Farida Wiley and Margaret Morse Nice.

The committee is to plan and execute a program which will continuously review nature books and manuscripts. This is to aid and encourage writers and publishers to provide accurate, interesting and well-written nature books. They are to select the twelve outstanding nature books of the year and give them as much publicity possible, to all nature groups, librarians, interested laymen, and commercial groups.

DO YOU KNOW . . . ?

the eminent person, or persons, seen napping quietly on one occasion at the current meetings?

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the enthusiastic Richard who lost a hat to the wind and icy brine at Jones Peach, and who plunged right in after it, popped it on his head and went on with the trip? If it weren't for this premature spring weather, he would be wearing that hat until the first thaw.

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what our *Praxie's* middle name is?

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that Roger Tory Peterson's latest, a book on the birds of Newfoundland, is going to be found in every class room in the province?

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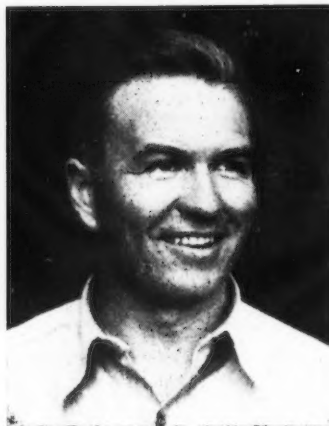
that in the *New York Times* December 4th issue, there were 45 Nature books advertised? More than music and drama combined, biography, religion, medicine, humor, psychology, or belles lettres?

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why the weather is so variable?

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the busy one-time northerner gone southern, who greases the wheels of all the meetings, watches over lost lady naturalists, and who brought his attractive wife and three small children to the last meeting?



Richard L. Weaver

GREETINGS FROM 1950

(Continued from Page One)

Howard Zahniser, from the Wilderness Society, and Book Editor of our President R. Westwood's Nature Magazine, kept everyone wide awake and on the edges of their seats, with his hilarious, analogous, and highly educational discourse, on the life and hard times of a book reviewer. It might be mentioned that his analogy put our President Westwood in a new and rather interesting light.

The informal showing of kodachromes by the members, after the business meeting in the evening, was as enjoyable as ever. Raymond Gregg, James Fowler, Mabel James, Tom Kieth, H. A. Maurice, Jr., Charles Mohr, and Leo Hadsell displayed some excellent pictures.

With re-elected President (Praxie) Richard Westwood overseeing, the Wednesday afternoon's proceedings were alive and stimulating. Allan Cruickshank showed

the usual magnificent Cruickshank skill, and gave an illuminating and informal lesson on how not to take nature pictures. His discussion was accompanied by excellent pictures, black and white blow-ups. We never saw so much note taking as we saw in this session. This last remark was true only until Edwin Way Teale, who followed Mr. Cruickshank, gave a talk on insect photography. Two such crowd gatherers would be enough for most groups, but Rutherford Platt was right there with some fascinating shots of wildflowers. By the time Glidden Baldwin presented his movie on Outstanding Trees, every note taker was glad to be able to just sit and enjoy tripping vicariously around the country with the Baldwin family.

Charles Mohr is in line for many thanks for the wonderful job he did of supplying the projection equipment for the various films shown, and also for his quiet, and efficient operation of the projectors.

The joint banquet on Thursday night left most people feeling it would be nicer for the American Nature Study Society to have its own banquet in Cleveland, next year. This was decided, because one of the pleasant aspects of this organization, has always been its friendly and informal atmosphere. It was felt that a smaller dinner would enable more people to become better acquainted with each other.

There is more than one surprise in store for the meetings next year, so start now to save your pennies for the annual meeting in Cleveland.

Inasmuch as the Fall issue of the News Letter was delayed, this issue will take its place, for the convenience of those of you who keep the News Letter on file. We will catch up with ourselves at a latter date.

We will publish more news of members, lists of new members, and information on the affiliated organizations, in a latter issue. This will give you readers more time (but not too much) to send in any gleanings of your own. Don't be bashful. There must be many among our groups who are not headliners, but who have much of value and interest to others. Let us know what you are doing, what your problems are and what you want to see in these columns. We can use good pictures too, so get busy.

WRITING NATURE BOOKS

By ELLSWORTH JAEGER

Curator of Education, Buffalo Museum of Science

Presented at the

Annual Meeting of the American Nature Study Society
in New York City, December 27, 1949

Nothing perhaps is more delightful than to relive again a thousand and one experiences, friendships and beauties that have been yours in the out of doors. You do relive these delights again and again when you write about them. But you derive more than personal pleasures from these writings, for you share them with others, many of whom would have never realized there exists a world so fascinating, had they not seen it described in your writings.

Not even selling it, has the same thrill, as the actual creation of an outdoor book.

To tell you how to write a nature book or even to suggest a few pointers is a problem indeed. Each and every writer has his own methods and techniques. I can only present my own case for whatever it may be worth.

It is amazing to me to hear the opinions of some folks on how an article or book is written. Many think the life of the scrivener is one of ease and slothfulness. According to these all you need to do is to attach a combination tape recorder and sausage grinder to your mind and turn on the switch. However, in real life it isn't done quite this way.

All will agree, however, that to write about something, one must have some background on the subject. I have just finished a manuscript and illustrations on screech owls. This was written after six years of study, and much observation, of a pair of screech owl pets. During this time I made copious notes, describing in detail all of the activities as I saw them, adding additional material I had gathered in the field from time to time of other screech owls. In this way the background material grew from which the manuscript itself was developed.

Actual observation is the most important part in nature writing. However, interpreting actions observed may sometimes be misleading unless you are a highly trained observer. It is wise to check authoritative background material from several sources.

Too many folks see what they want to see. Perhaps this is the reason so many have witnessed snakes swallow their young, milk snakes milking cows, hoop snakes rolling down the road and porcupines shooting quills at a machine gun rate. It is surprising how these superstitions still govern the observation of some people today.

Know your sources of background material such as museums, libraries, universities, etc., and the key people in them if you can. If you are stymied, don't be afraid to go to authorities for the information you want. You will usually find them most helpful, as well as interested in what you are doing.

Use the collections of such institutions or individuals for the necessary research on the subject you are writing about. As your subject develops you will want to check these sources time and again.

When planning a book or even an article, I find it necessary to make extensive files of material on the subject I plan to write about. I usually start planning a book several years ahead, and from time to time, place notes, ideas, observations and related material into a special file.

As I begin to work more definitely toward the book's actual production, I divide the material into *chapter files* and continue to add to each as ideas come to me. Thus, as time goes on, a lot of material will have accumulated, some of which may be changed or discarded entirely, as the actual production of the book becomes a reality.

Decide upon the type of audience and reader appeal which your book or article will reach before you begin production. Your work must necessarily be based upon this decision. Your method of presentation, your vocabulary, and even the subject matter to be included in your manuscript, will be influenced by the type of reader you want to reach.

Nature writing, like living, should be simple, unaffected, clear, direct, appealing to the imagination and interest. Don't be afraid of humor and fun. Do not flit about without ever alighting anywhere. Don't strain to make a point, and above all don't be stuffy and wordy.

Don't try to be aesthetic and sentimental. Try to keep within the realm of everyday life so that your readers will know what you are talking about.

To me the beginning and ending of a book or article are usually the most difficult parts to write. A good idea is to select the

most unique material you have in your story's file as a lead and build from this.

Constantly add to your vocabulary. The better your vocabulary, the easier it is to write. Study the vocabulary peculiar to the subject you are writing about, since each and every field has its own vocabulary.

Don't be afraid to express the things you feel. Most of us are inarticulate because we are afraid to let go in this direction. This of course is fatal to any creative expression.

A good title like a good name is most important since the title is the first thing to attract the reader's interest. An excellent book or article may sometimes lose many possible readers because of a poor title. Much thought should be given to this phase of writing, for its importance cannot be overestimated.

Background material that will lend interest, color, and charm to the subject, should be carefully garnered. Become familiar with the folk lore, the myths, legends and stories related to nature. A knowledge of Indians and pioneer lore is of great value in writing about the out of doors and the life therein. The Indian had a charming way of presenting his observations and you will also be amazed at the keenness and truth of many of their observations.

No writer, much less a nature writer will amount to much unless he is a *keen and analytical observer*. Train yourself to be observant. "Stop, Look and Listen" is as good advice to follow in writing, as in crossing railway tracks.

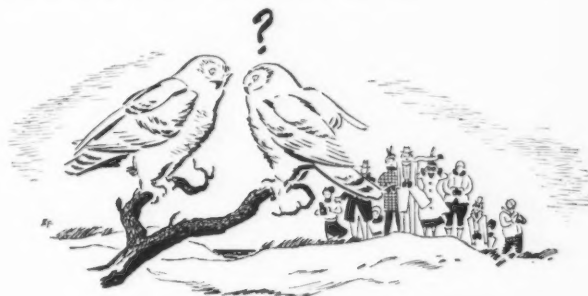
Illustrations for your book or article are very, very important and every writer should be sure to check up on the artist who is to illustrate his work. The public will often purchase a book because of the pictures it contains. Poor drawings can ruin a book's sale.

However, both author and artist should appreciate each other's problems and should cooperate whole heartedly in the manufacture of the finished book. Since I illustrate my own books and articles, I realize what these problems are and I am often my severest critic.

A word in regard to publishers may not be amiss. I would like to suggest that you secure catalogues of the various publishers, and study the type of books they produce. You will save their time and yours by making such a study. Their editorial policy may be such as to exclude nature material.

I have found too, that often one or two chapters and a comprehensive outline, is all that is needed by the publishers to determine whether or not they are interested in the type of manuscript you plan to develop.

Other writers, much more experienced than I, may disagree with me but these are suggestions I have found helpful in creating the few books I have sold. I hope these suggestions will be of some help to you in preparing material for publication.



JONES BEACH FIELD TRIP

The field trip started at the Hotel New Yorker, on the morning of December the 30th. The five trip leaders, Edwin Way Teale, Roger Tory Peterson, Dr. E. L. Palmer, Richard Pough and Richard Weaver, set off for Jones Beach accompanied by 90 people. Two buses had been hired, and the drivers were two of the best characters any group could ask for.

The day was cold and sparkling. The breeze, stiff and penetrating. The 90 people were all determined to get at least one good look at a Snowy Owl.

The first stop was an unscheduled one, to let off a perplexed lady passenger. The talk of Snowy Owls upset her, for she was a Philistine, and on the wrong bus.

Several people travelling to the beach by private cars easily traced the buses to their parking stations, simply by inquiring of any person, "Have you seen any Snowy Owls looking for two bus loads of people?"

(Continued on Page Four, Col. One)

AMERICAN NATURE STUDY SOCIETY — FINANCIAL STATEMENT 1949

RECEIPTS

Balance December 30, 1949	\$	233.88
Camp Scholarship refund		25.00
Gift Pack Foundation		1,000.00
Use of Roster		15.00
Dues		
1949 new members	295	
1949 renewals	433	
	728	1,309.00
1950 new members	34	
1950 renewals	221	
	255	519.25
1949 club dues		15.00
1950 club dues		15.00
		\$3,134.13

EXPENSES

Reprints	22.14
1948 Convention Expenses	
Secretarial	28.00
Programs	35.47

Dues NSTA '49 and '50	4.00
Addressograph plates	48.99
Secretarial Help	9.00
Bank Service Charges63
P. O. Box Rent	6.00
Telegrams90
Refunds50
Cornell Rural School Leaflets	267.50
Canadian Nature	543.75
Conservation Committee	24.88
News Letters	
Printing	190.66
Mailing	109.83
Postage	131.75
Printing	107.16
Camp Scholarship	25.00
Total	\$1,556.16

Receipts	\$3,134.13
Expenses	1,556.16
Balance	\$1,577.87
Perm. Fund	103.10
Gen. Fund	\$1,474.77

Summer Camp Scholarship	
Fund — \$137.50	
Anna Botsford Comstock	
Fund — \$132.36	

JONES BEACH FIELD TRIP

(Continued from Page Three, Col. Two)

Not too far from the parking lots, four Snowy Owls were seen. One was very cooperative, and sat quietly until the group was a scant hundred feet away, when he rose, and obligingly and majestically circled overhead before he departed for a dune farther away.

Dr. Palmer led a large group off to see the pioneer plants which are controlling the dunes. Geasters were found, and everyone was able to see the field mice and rabbits which are used as food by the owls. Examination of an owl pellet, showed that the birds had been feeding on the Dovekies which are being killed by oil from ships.

After lunch, which was bought at one of the park cafeterias, the group went farther up the beach. No more owls were discovered, but many winter visitors were seen in the canals along the road. The trippers returned to the hotel late in the afternoon, well-pleased with the success of their jaunt.

OBSERVATION TOWER

Robert Bullington, Professor of Science at Mac Murray College in Jacksonville, Illinois, wants a summer job. Has had considerable experience in nature work. Spent five summers in mosquito control. Graduate work in field botany, zoology, and ecology. Has taught biology for eighteen years.

* * *

C. L. Mellinger, Senior High School, Atlantic City, New Jersey, wants a girl counselor 18 years or older, to take charge of Nature Study at a Children's Camp.

* * *

NEW CLUBS. Three new clubs have joined the Society in 1949, making a total of seven. They are The Natural History Society of Eugene, Oregon, The Nature Society of Klamath Region, Oregon, and The Pacific Division of the Society. A fourth application has been received and will be approved, from the Minneapolis Science Museum Society. Each group is entitled to a voting representative on the Board of Directors, and pays \$5.00 for each 15 copies of the News Letter. Any Nature group is eligible. If interested, write to Richard L. Weaver, Secretary, P. O. Box 1078, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

The Arthur Hoyt Scott award and \$1000, was given to Ellen Eddy Shaw for outstanding work in the application of Botany and gardening to the education of children. This award had generally gone to men working along more technical lines.

Norman Dyer Harris, of the Boston Museum is currently proving the Museum's motto, "Science is fun!" on a television show. A few of the participants are: Double Trouble, a Maine lobster; Ollie, a great horned owl; Esmerelda, a Louisiana bullfrog; Slithers, a southern serpent, who pretends to be poisonous but isn't; Rosebud, a discharged skunk, and others.

William Mosher has joined the biology department of Skidmore College at Saratoga Springs, New York. He is conducting an Ecology class, new to Skidmore.

Wm. J. V. Babcock, professor of Biology at Eastern Nazarene College in Quincy, Mass. with the help of his chapter, has established a genuine field station for ecology and field biology. The Massachusetts Board of Education also asked him to establish a Blue Hills Nature Study Laboratory. He has been working closely with teachers in the grade and secondary schools, responsible for nature study work.

The Nature Society of the Klamath Region, Oregon, was the only nature organization to attend the public hearing at Medford, to offer testimony in opposition to the construction of the Lewis Creek Dam upon the main stream of the Rogue, by the Dam and Bureau of Reclamation. They felt that insufficient consideration, had been given to all natural values involved. It seems that the Bureau confined its arguments to fish and little else. This is good work and active conservation effort.

Dr. Raymond Kienholz, University of Conn. announced a Conservation Tour for summer 1951. A nation wide study of our natural resources. Route, is to the west coast and back by bus. Enrollment is for 20. Limited number of scholarships available. Six credits for graduate or under graduates. Cost is estimated at \$400 per person for eight weeks. Sounds very interesting and certainly not expensive.

It is past time for the dues to be in. The Secretary is a busy man and would greatly appreciate your assistance in getting the decks cleared for action. How about sending your dues in now, with the name of a new member. We have a goal to try for, 1000 members in 1950.

